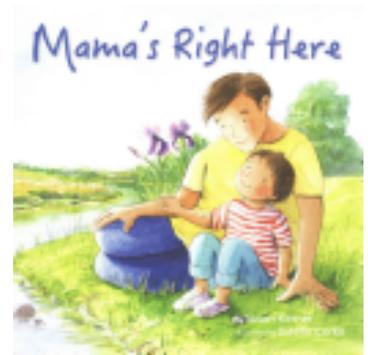


# Mama's Right Here

By Susan Kerner

*Mama's Right Here* is a delicate, affectionately written reminder that a mother's love never disappears. Even when a mother is absent, her presence is constant in a child's heart. With comforting rhyme and gentle illustrations, this book shares the important message with children that a mother's love is always with them - in the way they look and in everything they do. A companion book, *Always By My Side*, also written by Susan Kerner, shares a father's ever-present love.



## Discussion and Questions:

- This book will require adults to be very considerate of the audience. If reading to a whole group, ensure the timing is appropriate. If a child in the group has recently lost a loved one or are experiencing a great loss of any kind, ensure that the child and their caregivers are comfortable with the story being shared at school. While the book offers great coping strategies for dealing with loss, it is important to be sensitive to the audience and make sure that they are prepared to address the loss.
- Discuss with children common feelings people have when they lose a loved one. Give an example of a time when you experienced a loss and explain how you felt.
- Talk about and look at the different emotions in the book. Allow children to act them out. How can they tell what the person is feeling? Talk about the situation. Talk about other situations that may cause those feelings.
- Memories and Reminders
  - Discuss what a memory or reminder is (i.e., It is the way items, places, sounds, etc. can remind us of our loved one), and how memories/reminders might make people feel. Be prepared to discuss possible negative memories/reminders. Give examples and/or point out examples in the book.
  - Talk about the different ways in which the characters in the book remember their mom.
  - Relate how individuals remember their loved ones with how the characters in the story remember the mother. Use the objects collected in the Show and Tell section below, to compare to the different pages in the story as it is read.

## Activities:

Ages Birth to 5:

- **Create a Memory Book**
  - Have children to choose pictures they want to use to create a short memory book or collage. They can use photos of their loved ones or images from magazines, books, etc. Drawings can also be included. Invite caregivers of very young children to choose photos, images, or help create drawings. Older children can be assisted as needed.
  - After the pictures have been gathered or created, put them into a scrapbook or photo album of some kind. This can be created or simple photo albums can be purchased at craft or dollar stores.
  - Take time to have an older child describe how the image reminds them of their loved one. On a facing page in the book, write a summary of what the child shared. Caregivers of young children should be encouraged to share why they chose these images and consider writing that down as well. If a caregiver is hesitant to share with the early childhood professional, encourage them to write their thoughts down at a later time with a trusted adult.

- **Be A Songwriter**

- Caregivers can write songs with/for young children about (or to dedicate to) their loved one. Older children can compose songs themselves and with support as needed. Children can also compose short simple poems, similar to Susan Kerner's story, or simple tunes they can hum.
- Songs the child and caregiver used to sing together or that the absent caregiver may have sung to the child can also be particularly meaningful.
- Children can make instruments such as rain sticks or tissue box guitars to play while they sing.

Ages 3 to 5:

- **Emotion Role Play**

- Discuss the different feelings someone might have because of a loss or because they are missing someone.
  - Use an emotion chart to role play the different emotions a child might experience when they have lost someone they love. Point to the different emotions on the chart, and reenact them with facial expressions, body language and words.
  - Use an emotions wheel with several specific emotions such as sadness, anger, frustration, etc. on it. An example and directions for creating an emotion wheel can be found here: <https://bit.ly/2EiOg94>.
  - Spin the wheel and act out the emotion the spinner lands on. Modeling this activity for the child can be helpful. Children should be encouraged to express themselves in whatever way they like.

- **Show and Tell**

- In a home setting, invite caregivers to gather items or pictures that remind them of the loved one the child may be missing. In a group setting, children can select items from home and bring them in to share with the group.
- This activity may help children who experience sadness throughout the day while they are away from their caregiver at school.
- Talk about the items and invite children to share how they remind them of their loved one.